

NOTE: The exchange began at 7:10 p.m. at El Presidente Intercontinental Hotel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

## Remarks at the State Dinner in Mexico City *May 6, 1997*

Mr. President, Mrs. Zedillo, members of the Mexican Cabinet and other distinguished public servants, citizens of Mexico, on behalf of Hillary, of all the members of our delegation from the administration and the Congress, I first thank you for the graciousness and warmth with which you have welcomed us. We live side by side as neighbors, we work together day-in and day-out as partners, but the warmth of your reception has reminded us today that we are also close friends.

Just before the dinner began, President and Mrs. Zedillo took Hillary and me to see the magnificent murals of Diego Rivera that adorn this great palace. They are very moving works. Along with the paintings of Orozco and Siqueiros, they represent the peak of artistic achievement in this century and one of the many contributions of Mexico to the culture of the world. Anyone who has seen it knows that the power of Rivera's "Epic of the Mexico People in Their Struggle for Freedom and Independence" comes from more than mere technical skill. In this grand work we see the proud spirit of Mexico's revolution and Mexico's heart.

Instantly, I saw Rivera's extraordinary love of the Mexican people, the same passion which then and now inspires Mexico's journey toward a better and freer society. Rivera never actually finished his epic, and perhaps that is fitting because the journey of every nation to increase the freedom of its people, the labor at the very heart of democracy, never ends.

I am delighted to be in Mexico at another time when this struggle is making a dramatic stride forward. Mexico's leaders and political parties are opening the doors of democracy wider than ever. New citizen groups have sown the seeds of a vibrant civil society that promises to deliver to all Mexicans a better and freer future.

Mr. President, you reminded us that it was in this palace where Benito Juarez corresponded with Abraham Lincoln. Our President, Mr. Lin-

coln, who many of us consider to be our greatest President, called in the United States in his time for a new birth of freedom. The murals here remind us here that the birth of freedom is more than a matter of improving our political systems. We must also strive to see that our citizens are free from want and hunger, free from the dangers our new age brings, and free to make the most of their own lives.

The partnership we seek with Mexico is one that will advance that kind of freedom, here and throughout the Americas. We want to work together to lay the foundation of an enduring prosperity. We want to join together to improve the air and water we share. We want to work to turn our border into a region of growth, to defeat disease, to defeat the threat of drugs, organized crime, and corruption.

Mr. President, we can succeed because we have forged a relationship as broad and deep as that which exists between any two nations. And today we have made important progress. We are answering the demands of our time, advancing the common goals of our people, serving a friendship that is at the heart of what we all want for our future. In so doing, we honor the legacy of Benito Juarez and Abraham Lincoln and the constant quest for a new birth of freedom.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you now to join with me in toasting President and Mrs. Zedillo and their family, to partnership of our nations and the new day of freedom it will bring to the friends and neighbors of our shared continent.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:09 p.m. at the Presidential Palace. In his remarks, he referred to President Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico and his wife, Anilda Patricia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

May 7 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1997

## Address to the People of Mexico in Mexico City May 7, 1997

Thank you, Mr. President, for the wisdom of your words, for the warmth of your personal expression, and for the great generosity with which the people of Mexico have received my wife and our delegation, the members of the administration and the Members of Congress. We thank all those who have been a part of that in the Mexican Government, throughout the political system, and citizens at large.

I am honored to speak today in the heart of this magnificent capital, where Teotihuacan and Aztec civilizations flourished, where one of the world's greatest cities grew up centuries before the first English tents were pitched in Jamestown, Virginia, or Plymouth, Massachusetts. I'm frankly a little envious that Hillary got to spend an extra day here, and I want to thank those who are responsible for the wonderful welcome she received in the Yucatan. Almost 22 years ago now, Hillary and I came to Mexico for our honeymoon. Mexico won our hearts then, but now as then, *mi encanta Mexico*.

I come here today to celebrate the ties that bind the United States and Mexico and to help set a course to strengthen them for the age of possibility before us as we enter the 21st century. Our nations and our hemisphere stand at a crossroads as hopeful as the time when Hidalgo and Morelos lit the torch of liberty for Mexico almost two centuries ago.

Democracy has swept every country but one in the Americas, giving people a vote and a voice in their future. Decades of coups and civil wars have given way to stability, to peace, to free markets, and to the search for social justice and a cleaner environment. The electricity of change is surging throughout our hemisphere and nowhere more hopefully than Mexico.

I congratulate the Mexican people for carrying forward bold political reforms that will lead in July to the most intensely contested elections in your history. We know from our own 220-year experiment that democracy is hard work. It must be defended every day. But it is worth the effort, for it has produced more opportunity for people to make the most of their own lives than all its rivals.

Four years ago, in this very place, we began a grand common effort to secure democracy's gains in our hemisphere for all our people. On behalf of my administration, Vice President Gore here invited the nations of our hemisphere to the Summit of the Americas in Miami. There we set an ambitious agenda to create free trade throughout the hemisphere and to cooperate on a host of other issues with the goal of fulfilling the age-old dream of building a truly democratic and prosperous family of the Americas in the 21st century.

Revolutionary forces of integration and technology and trade and travel and communications are shaping our times and bringing us all closer together. The stroke of a computer key sends ideas, information, and money across the planet at lightening speed. Every day we use products that are dreamed up in one country, financed in another, manufactured in a third, with parts made in still other countries, and then sold all over the world. Like it or not, we are becoming more interdependent. And we see that, too, on the negative side, as when a stock market crash, an environmental disaster, or a dread disease in one country sends shock waves deeply felt far beyond its borders.

While economic integration is inevitable, its shape and its reach depend upon our response to it. In both our countries, there are some who would throw up walls of protection to ward off the challenge of change. But more and more, people here, in the United States, and throughout the Americas understand that openness, competition, and the flow of ideas and culture can improve the lives of all our people if we ensure that these forces work for and not against all our people.

With our long border, rich history, and complex challenges, Mexico and the United States have a special responsibility to work together to seize the opportunities and defeat the dangers of this time. Our partnership for freedom and democracy and for prosperity and our partnership against drugs, organized crime, environmental decay, and social injustice is fundamental to the future of the American people and to the future of the Mexican people.